"JAGGERNAUT" UNDER BRITISH SUPREMACY AND THE RESURGENCE OF THE KHURDA-RAJAS AS "RAJAS OF PURI"

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CHAPTER XVIII

"JUGGERNAUT" UNDER BRITISH SUPREMACY AND THE RESURGENCE OF THE KHURDA RĀJĀS AS "RĀJĀS OF PURI"

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In 1765 the revenue Dewānī of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa had been granted to the East India Company by the Moghul Emperor Shāh Ālam. From the very beginning of their rule over Bengal, the East India Company tried to regain Orissa which had belonged to the Dewānī of Bengal till it had been ceded *de facto* by Alīvardī to the Mārāṭhās of Nagpur in 1751 A.D. Already in 1766 Lord Clive sent T. Motte to Sambalpur "to sound the officers of Jānujī's court whether he would cede the province of Orissa for an annual tribute".[1]

Two years later, the Marāṭhā king Jānujī Bhonslā submitted his detailed conditions for a cession of Orissā. As the first condition (of altogether 13 points), he explicitly mentioned the Jagannātha temple: "That the Jaggernaut Pagoda and all the duties collected from the pilgrims shall remain to the Marathas—that a Governor on their part shall be placed there, who shall have the supreme authority and the villages, lands, etc., which have been formerly allowed for the support of the Bramins and place shall be continued to them".[2] In its reply the East India Company conceded only "for the preservation of the religious ceremony annually performed by the pilgrims of Jaggernaut Pagoda, a person may be allowed to reside there on behalf of the Maharaja Janojee",[3] but without having any substantial power. After the negotiations had come nearly to a standstill for several years the Governor General Cornwallis in 1789 introduced another interesting aspect into the negotiations. In a letter to Malet, the British Resident at the Marāṭhā court at Poona Cornwallis wrote. "It may be wise in this British government *to devise means for encouraging a spirit of pilgrimage* among Hindus of Hindustan and the Deccan to the Company's dominions and for that reason, if you come to the discussion of conditions for cession of

[1] *Early European Travellers in the Nagpur Territories*, p. 1.
[2] Bengal Select Committee Consultations, 10.2.1768 (quoted by B.C. Ray, 1960, p. 92).
[3] Bengal Select Committee Consultations, 13.12.1768 (quoted by B.C. Ray, 1960, p. 95).

Cuttack, I should not have objection to grant particular privileges or exceptions from all government duties to Maratha subjects on religious visits and pilgrimage to Banaras, Gaya and to Jagannāth when surrendered to us".[4] But Cornwallis failed, like his predecessors, to acquire Orissa with diplomatical means.

In the preparations for the war against the Marathas in 1803, the East India Company was, therefore, very much aware of the importance of the Jagannātha temple, because "the possession of the god had always given the dominion of Orissa", as W.W. Hunter put it nearly seventy years later.[5] The Governor-General Wellesley personally took the greatest interest in the matter and sent at the very day of the declaration of war a strict order regarding the Jagannātha temple to Lt. Col. Campbell, the commanding officer of the British invading forces, in Orissa. In this famous despatch—an indispensable source material for the history of early British rule in Orissa—for the first time a Christian Governor-General dictated a policy to be persued regarding a particular Hindu temple[6]: "On your arrival at Juggernaut you will employ every possible precaution to preserve the respect due to the Pagoda, and to the religious prejudices of the Brahmins and Pilgrims. You will furnish the Brahmins with such guards as shall afford perfect security to their persons, Rites and Ceremonies, and to the sanctity of the Religious Edifices, and you will strictly enjoin those under your Command to observe your orders on this important subject with the utmost degree of accuracy and vigilance".[7]

After the troops had already crossed the borders of Orissa, the Secretary to the Governor-General forwarded to the officers leading the campaign a letter which was written by a famous Pandit of Bengal to the priests of Puri. In this letter the Pandit assured the priests of Puri about the religious tolerance of the British and their particular benevolence to their subjects.[8] Shortly before the British troops reached Puri, they were informed by priests of Puri that "the Brahmins at the holy temple had consulted and applied to Juggernaut to inform them what power was now to have his temple under its protection, and that he had given a decided answer that the English Government was in future to be his guardian".[9] After the priests of the "Lord of the World" had thus agreed to place their temple under the British administration, the British troops entered Puri on 18.9.1803 without facing any resistance.

[4] Bengal Political Consultations, 25.2.1789 (quoted by B.C. Ray, 1960, p. 105).

[5] Hunter, 1872, vol. II, p. 56.

[6] P. Mukherjee, 1977, p. 32.

[7] IOL: H.M. Series 59, fol. 423/4.

[8] Government to Melville and Campbell, 3.9.1803. Bengal Secret Persian Correspondence, translation (1803, No. 180). According to the "*Notes Relative to the Late Transactions in the Maratha Empire*" of Fort William (London 1804, p. 81) it is very probably that the letter of Paṇḍit Jagannātha of Triveni in Bengal was dispatched to the principal priests of Puri on the 14.9.1803 after Manikapatnam in the southwest of Puri was taken into possession by the British troops. A favourable answer of the priests —obviously "Jagannātha's decided answer"—reached the camp on 16.9.1803. On the 18th the British troops encamped at Puri which was immediately evacuated by the Maratha troops.

[9] Melville to Gov. Gen., 11.9.1803 (Parliamentary Papers, 1845/664, p. 77).

Only one day later, Melville reported to the Governor-General that he used Jagannātha's "decided answer" as a strategem to win over the feudatory chiefs of Orissa: "I have sent by special messengers to some of the principal Rajahs letters as my judgment tells me were best adapted to the mentioned purpose *and the circumstances of Juggernaut's decision (which was a fact) was not omitted.*"[10] The Christian government was thus following the line of the Hindu Rājās, who had often used Jagannātha for political purpose.[11]

During the following peace negotiations the ambassador of the Marāṭhās tried hard to regain at least Puri because, "Jagannātha was his own Pagoda, he was desirous to retain it his honour was involved in this point."[12] Obviously the Rājā of Nagpur had tried to negotiate with the East India Company according to Jānujī Bhonsla's first condition of the year 1768. The Company knew that "the loss of Juggernaut must deeply affect the considerations of the Raja of Berar [Nagpur] in the eyes of all native powers."[13] But it never hesitated to take full possession of the Jagannātha temple and its hinterland.[14]

The importance of Puri and its Jagannātha cult for the consolidation of the British rule in Orissa became most evident during the first car festival in Puri after the British conquest of Orissa. In July 1804 the Commissioner Harcourt visited the *ratha yātrā.* On his "arrival near the city all the principal priests of the Pagoda met and attended [him]." During the car festival in Puri "the priests and pilgrims received [him] with shouts and clapping hands' and he observed "that the general impression both among the priests and the pilgrims is highly favourable to the British Government" Harcourt then drew the conclusion from his observations: "On all occasions when the subject of that valuable acquisition the Province of Cuttack, is under considerations the important possession of the Temple of Juggernaut must stand in a prominent point of view; *in a political light its value is incalculable.*'[15] In the same month a presentation, containing a long slip of paper with verses, overlaid with gold leaf, and signed by the principal priests and religious functionaries of Puri, was sent to the Governor-General Lord Wellesley.[16] The significance of the reception which the priests had given to Harcourt and the petition they had sent to Wellesley is

[10] Melville to the Governor General 19.9.1803, Secret and Political Consultations; 1.3.1804, No. 14. IOL (quoted by P. Mukherjee, 1977, p. 34).

[11] The missionary James Peggs, in one of his attacks against the "British connections with Idolatory in India" blames the historian Hamilton for referring to this event: "Hamilton states :' 'Possession was taken of the Town and Temple of Pooree by the British, Sept 18th, 1803—the sacred will of the Idol being first ascertained through the medium of the officiating priest !' Is the historian in earnest or in jest? What a farce! A British army at the gate of Juggernaut's city would soon settle the question of entrance." (J. Peggs, *A Letter . on the Present State of British Connections with Idolatory in India* .. London 1841, p. 11).

[12] Home Miscellaneous, Vol. 623, pp. 86-111 (quoted by B C. Ray, 1960, p. 126).

[13] Selection from the Wellesley Despatches, p. 410 (quoted by P. Mukherjee, 1977, p. 39).

[14] John Melville to Shawe (Priv. Secr. to Wellesley, 1.7.1805, Wellesley Papers, Add. Ms., 13611).

[15] John Melville to Shawe, 11.7.1804 (Wellesley Papers, Add. Ms. 13611).

[16] B.C. Ray, 1960, p. 97.

very clear. They meant the recognition of the British East India Company by the priests of Puri, the hierocratic power of Orissa.

It is reasonable that the East India Company, especially during the first years of its rule in Orissa, were highly interested in retaining and strengthening their influence in their "important possession of the temple of Juggernaut" with its hundred thousands of pilgrims as multiplier of their fame and legitimation of its rule. This policy, however, had not taken into account the Rājā of Khurda "the fallen, but still revered, descendant and representative of the ancient native sovereigns".[17] Their relationship with the Company had been determined from the very beginning by the earlier loss of Puri and the three most important *parganas* to the Marāṭhās. Rājā Mukunda Deva II of Khurda (1795-1817) had supported the British against the Marāṭhās after he had been offered one lakh (100.000) of rupies for military cooperation and for the transport of British baggage and artillery through his territory.[18] Mukunda Deva's agent (*vākil*) had agreed to this proposal under the condition that the British would restore to the Rājā the territory which his grand-father had lost about 40 years ago through the common enemy, the Marāṭhās.[19] When Mukunda Deva realized that the British Commissioner Harcourt was not willing to enter into any negotiations in this point, he sent, in March 1804, his Dewān, Jayi Rājaguru, to Cuttack with 2000 armed men in order to interview the Commissioner. But Harcourt made it clear that "not a span of land could be given up".[20] After further fruitless negotiations, Mukunda Deva and his Dewān Jayi Rājaguru became bitterly disappointed and took the matter into their own hands. They improved the internal defence of Khurda, entered into secret negotiations with the Marāṭhās and several tributary chiefs and tried to regain their influence in the Puri temple or, as the British officer and historian G. Toynbee put it, "he was detected in an intrigue relative to the affairs of the Pooree temple" In order to prevent Mukunda from regain-ing influence in Puri he was "forbidden to issue orders on any person whatever residing within the limits of Moghulbandi territory [including Puri] without the express sanction of the Commissioners".[21] Harcourt wrote to the Governor General that "I do think the Rājā of Khurda must be exterminated" because "everything tends, I think, to increase the necessity of making an example of that fellow".[22]

When the Marāṭhā war in West India, too, had come to an end, Harcourt made preparations for a campaign against Khurda. After the Khurda troops had made a few raids in the border region near Pipli, Harcourt stormed with a strong troop the fort of Khurda on 4.12.1804. The Rājā of Khurda was captured one month

17 W. Ewer (repr.) 1965, p. 111.

18 B.C. Ray, 1959, p. 24f.

19 G. Toynbee (repr.) 1961, p. 7: "When we took the province in 1803, the Rajah passively espoused our cause and tendered his allegiance to the British Government, doubtless in the hope that these parganas would be restored to him."

20 Turner to Govt., 10.10.1804 (quoted by B.C. Ray, 1959, p. 50).

21 G. Toynbee, 1961, p. 7.

22 Harcourt to Shawe 1.10 and 3.10.1804. Add. Ms., 13610, p. 66f. and p. 74 (quoted by B.C. Ray, 1959, p. 57f).

later and taken as a prisoner to Cuttack and later to Midnapur. Jayi Rājaguru was hanged for his part in the "revolt" and the whole of the Khurda territory was finally confiscated.

The British administrators, including even Stirling, justified this campaign as a retaliatory measure against "a most unprovoked rising against the newly established English Government".[23] The swiftness[24] and the rigour, however, with which these retaliations were carried out, from which the Feudatory Rājās of Kujang and Kanika were spared in spite of the hostilities against the Company, leave no doubt that the British Government wanted to end once for ever the theocratic suzerainty of the Gajapatis of Khurda and their influence upon the feudatory rājās of Orissa. After Khurda had already been deprived by the Marāṭhās about forty years ago of more than half of its territory, separated from its feudatory rājās, and driven out of the superintendence of the Jagannātha temple, the annexion of the rest of its territory in December 1804 seemed to end the great tradition of the Gajapatis of Orissa.

It was only the subsequent change of British policy regarding its own connections with the Jagannātha temple which resulted in the unexpected resurgence of the Khurda Rājās as the "Rājās of Puri" The East India Company initially had followed the administrative system of the Jagannātha temple as it existed under the Marāṭhās when they conquered Orissa in 1803.[25] The only major exception was the pilgrim tax which was abolished after the conquest. But it was reintroduced in 1806. During the early years, however, it became more and more evident to the British officers that this administrative system was responsible for the fact that "the discipline of the Temple has gradually relaxed".[26] After 1803, when the First Superintendent (*amil*) of the temple had fled with the Marāṭhās, and before any effective British control was established "all order and regulation was at a stop. Every servant of the temple does as he pleases and most of them amass wealth by the plunder of the pilgrims".[27] As it was the declared policy of the East India Company towards the various religious communities to guarantee "the undisturbed exercise of their religious rites and ceremonies and to preserve their places of worship inviolate",[28] it became a political commitment to exercise a strong control in order to prevent any further deterioration of the Jagannātha cult. But the more the British officers interfered into the reorganization of the cult the more they realized that being forbidden entry into the temple as Non-Hindus they could not arbitrate fully in the temple administration. They had, therefore, to look for a proper person upon whom they could entrust the

[23] Stirling, 1840, p. 143.

[24] The "annexion of that country to the territories of the Honorable Company in the province of Cuttack" was confirmed by a proclamation, issued under the authority of the Board, which had reached Cuttack already on 15.12.1804. (Fortescue to Grome, 15.12.1804, Board of Revenue, Cuttack, Princely States, Vol. XI, p. 19).

[25] B.C. Ray, 1959, p. 92-141, K.M. Patra, 1971, p. 222-275, and P. Mukherjee 1977.

[26] Grome Report, 10.6.1805, p. 6. (JTC., Vol. 11).

[27] Grome Report, 10.6.1805, p. 6.

[28] Govt. to Richardson, Bengal Revenue Consultation, 1.7.1814.

administration and the responsibility to put an end to the "relaxed discipline of the temple".

It is astonishing that in early 1807 the choice ultimately fell upon the Rājā of Khurda who, only few years ago, had been declared as an enemy of the Honorable Company and who had since been imprisoned in Midnapur. But the investigation of Charles Groeme, the Collector of the Southern Division at Puri, had also revealed in 1805 that "during the periods that the affairs of the Temple were under the immediate control and management of the Rajahs of Khoorda, any, even the slightest deviation from the prescribed duties were severely punished either by fine or corporal chastisement"[29] The Rājā of Khurda with his traditional authority over the priests of Purī thus still was the best suited person to reinforce the "order and regulation" in the temple and to fulfil thus the commitment of the Company "to preserve the places of worship inviolate". Because it seemed to be highly improbable that any further danger had to be apprehended from the Rājā of Khurda after the territorial basis of his former power had been destroyed, he was released from Midnapur. With the Regulation IV of 1809 the superintendence of the temple, its internal economy, the conduct and management of its affairs and the control over its priests and officers was vested in the Rājā of Khurda. But from being virtually "Kings without a kingdom" the Rājās of Puri succeeded in the following decades in compensating for the loss of their political power by building up a "religious state" through the superintendence of the hereditary temple of the Gajapati kings of Orissa.[30]

After most of the former feudatories of Khurda had been acknowledged by the British Government as subordinate allies, it was one of the first concerns of Mukunda Deva of Khurda to improve himself his own ritual and political position among these feudatory rājās of Orissa. Whereas before the British conquest of Orissa in 1803, the Rājās of Khurda had tried to strengthen their alliance with their feudatories by "sharing" their rights, Mukunda Deva tried to reverse this development. He interfered with the above-mentioned rights which the feudatory rājās claimed to have received from Mukunda's forefathers in the time of their greatest distress (chapter 17). The first victim of Mukunda Deva's "ritualistic war" was Rājā Padmanābha Nārāyaṇa Deva of Khimedi in South Orissa. He was a member of the dynasty which, only half a century ago, had attacked Khurda, a fact which had finally led to the downfall of Khurda under the Marāṭhās. When Padmanābha of Khimedi visited Puri together with his family in May 1810 to have a *darśana* of Lord Jagannātha, Mukunda would not permit him to enter the temple. The Settlement Officer at Puri forced Mukunda Deva to give the Rājā of Khimedi permission. But now Mukunda persuaded the cooks of the temple not to prepare any *mahāprasāda* food. "Upwards of four or five thousand souls are now starving for want of necessary

[29] Ibid.; Grome also emphasized the strict control of Khurda: "As a competent knowledge of the shaster was deemed indispensable for the proper performance of the duties entrusted to the principal shewaks. The Khoorda Rajah always paid great attention to the education in this particular of the heir to those offices" (p. 16).

[30] Kulke, 1974, p. 72.

mahapersad including Rajah Puddohlab Narrain Deo and his followers, as it is not proper nor conformable in their religion, to cook victuals in their houses in Pooree, when they come on pilgrimage, but only to live on mahapersad".[31]

Mukunda Deva's behaviour might have been understandable in the case of a rival Gajapati King, but his treatment was not a particular case. In 1813 the Rājā of Khandpara in Central Orissa entered Puri with the "insignia of Rajahship". This was again too much for Mukunda Deva, who prevented the Rājā of Khandpara from entering the Temple. The Rājā of Khandpara complained to the Collector "stating that Rajah Muchoondeo prevented him making Durshan with himself and his family in the mode he has been accustomed and that he is agreeable to the customs and rules of the Temple".[32] A similar incident seems to have happened during the visit of the Rāṇi of Sambalpur. In a letter to the Governor-General, Mr. Richardson, Member of the Board of Revenue on deputation to Cuttack, mentioned "three instances of offensive and contemptuous and disrespectful treatment" by the Rājā of Puri against the feudatory Rājās of Khemundi, Khandpara and against the Rāṇi of Sambalpur.[33]

Through this "disrespectful treatment" Mukunda Deva apparently tried to restrict the rights of the feudatory rājās of Orissa in "his" Jagannātha temple which had now become the sole oasis of his power and authority. This behaviour of the Rājā of Puri was observed with growing suspicion by the British officers in Orissa. They complained that Mukunda Deva "prevented the southern Rajahs and the Ghujats [Gaḍajāta] from visiting the temple for several years",[34] which caused a loss of pilgrim tax.

But the British officers also suspected Mukunda Deva of using his superintendence of the Jagannātha temple for his political ends. Already in 1814, Richardson warned the Government at Calcutta: "I am informed by creditable authority sufficient to obtain my entire belief that the Rajah entertains and incalculates the belief that he will one day, *through the power and influence of Juggernauth*, be restored to the supreme command and authority of the Province of Cuttack, which tradition and family (oral or written) history state to have been invested in his ancestors previous to the establishment of the Musalman authority some centuries ago."[35]

These were in deed prophetic words which presaged the great *pāika* (militia) revolt. In this uprising of the landed militia of the former Khurda state in 1817 the

[31] Busby, Collector of Tax to R. Mitford, Collector, Cuttack, 17.5.1810 (JTC, I, p. 183).

[32] Trower to Busby, 29.1.1814, (Orissa State Archives, Vol. Jan. 1814-Dec. 1818) Laurie, 18?0, p. 79 mentions further details of Mukunda Deva's "ritual struggle". (He quotes from an unkown letter of a Collector [Busby?] witnout mentioning the date and the rājā's name). When a feudatory Rājā with his family proceeded with the approbation of the Government to the temple "he was with his people personally insulted, principally by Pundahs and Purharries, shouting, joking, clapping hands, pelting stones etc., which strongly inclines me to think they were the partisans of the Rajah of Khurdah, sent there for that particular purpose."

[33] Richardson to Gov. Gen. 6.1.1814.

[34] Trower to Richardson, 18.3.1814 (JTC, I, p 219).

[35] Richardson to Govt., 5.2.1814

Rājā of Khurda played, although more indirectly, an important role because the insurgents wanted to place him again on the throne of Orissa. The reason for this early restorative movement was mainly the deep socio-economic distress of the political elite and their rural militia in the former Khurda state, i.e. the *pāikas* and their leaders (*nāyaka* or *khaṇḍaitas*). They were the first in Orissa who felt the ruthless character of the initial impact of the British revenue system. Whereas under the Muslim and the Maratha rule they had been allowed to enjoy their hereditary fiefs (*jagīr*), the East India Company not only deprived the *pāikas* and the *khaṇḍaitas* of their privileges in their service land by assessing them at the same rate as the other tillers of the land. The *khaṇḍaitas* also lost the *chaupani* tax which they had previously been entitled to collect from the inhabitants in their *mahals* (estate) for maintaining law and order. Due to the increasing hight of the assessment[36] and the loss of further income through taxes many *khaṇḍaitas* fell into arrears of unpaid revenue. The invariable result of this mortgaging was the loss of the land which was auctioned in Cuttack and in Calcutta, where Orissa soon had become a favourite hunting ground for speculators. Thus after about ten years out of the original 2.340 Oriya proprietors only 1.449 had remained in 1816.[37]

One of those, who had been deprived of his ancestral home, was Jagabandhu, the general (*bakṣi*) of Khurda who had inherited this office from his forefathers together with the valuable estate Rorang near Puri. In Orissa he was regarded as the representative of the Gajapati not only by the population of Khurda but also by the rājās of the *Gaḍajata* states. Through the fraudulant machinations of a rich Bengali[38] who tried to establish a great estate around Puri, Jagabandhu lost all his land. In the official report about the *pāika* rising it is admitted that Jagabandhu, the second man of the former Khurda state, had become in fact a beggar for about two years. But "even in his fallen condition he continued to cling to those insignia of state to which his rank and titles as a principal servant of the Rajah of Khurda entitled him."[39] Jagabandhu became soon the leader of the traditional rural aristocracy, the *khaṇḍaitas* and the *pāikas* who had lost their land and privileges. At the end of March 1817 an open revolt started which soon spread over the whole former Khurda territory. Khurda, Banpur and Puri were conquered and the British offices looted. Jagabandhu and the *pāikas* then tried to win the Rājā of Khurda as their acknowledged leader: "The first step taken by the rebels, after repelling the early [British] movements against them was an attempt to place the Rajah of Khoordah at their head, well aware of the

[36] After 1804 the assessment of the former Khurda state was fixed at 1,06,000 Rupees. Under the Marathas it was only 70,666 Rs. Out of this amount the Khurda Rājā paid as annual tribute to the Marathas only 15,000 Rs. The rest of 55,666 Rs. remained in the country for the court at Khurda and the various officers down to the *pāikas* (see B.C. Ray, 1959. p. 166).

[37] B.C. Ray, 1959, p. 180. This picture is even worse if one considers that in Mughalbandi out of the land worth Rs. 1,33,93,000 annual revenue, the original proprietors in 1818 retained only land worth of Rs. 30,000.

[38] See P. Mukerjee, *Krishna Chandra Singh, a much maligned man*, in: OHRJ, VI, 4 (1958) 271-280 and Ewer, op. cit.

[39] See G.N. Dash, below chapter 19.

strength which his name would lend to their cause, and of the assistance they might hope, in the event of his restoration, to derive from the whole body of the Gujrat chiefs, ranged under the banner of this fallen, but still revered, descendant and representative of their ancient native sovereign."[40] The Judge and Magistrate Impey at Cuttack wrote to the Government at Calcutta: "The insurgents called upon the Raja and Jagabandhu issues orders in his name. Their avowed intention is to proceed to Pooree and reconduct him in triumph to his territory."[41] When Jagabandhu with a group of several thousands *pāikas* had entered Puri the priests, which, only fourteen years ago, had welcomed the British as the new guardians of Jagannātha, now "openly proclaimed the fall of the English rule and the restoration of the authority of the ancient line of sacred kings".[42]

The sources about Rājā Mukunda Deva's participation in the rising are controversial. Although Ewer in his official report had come to the conclusion that "not a particle of evidence is attainable" that Mukunda ever favoured the rising, the Mādalā Pāñjī, written by the temple scribe (*deula karaṇa*) of Puri, states that "both the father (Mukunda) and his son secretly revolted against the British rule and order. They did not openly fight with the English but invoked the *pāikas* and helped them in looting the English treasure in Puri."[43] It is very likely that the Rāja initially had in deed secretly favoured "his rebellious servants" But contrary to the last Moghul Emperor Bāhadur Shāh, who was in a very similar situation during the great mutiny of 1857/58, Mukunda Deva did not join the insurgents, because he had already personally experienced the British retaliation in 1804/05.

The rebellion was soon suppressed after 5 additional companies had been sent to Orissa from Midnapur in May 1817.[44] Mukunda Deva together with his son was taken to Cuttack where they were placed in close confinement. The futile, clearly restorative *pāika bidroha* put an end once and for all to the Puri Rājās' hope of regaining the lost territory of Khurda. But the rising had clearly spotlighted the high position of "this fallen, but still revered, descendant and representative of the ancient native sovereigns" in the traditional society of Orissa. Mukunda Deva died after few months in Cuttack. His struggle for the resurgence of the Rājās of Khurda was, however, continued in Puri by his successors.[45]

Under "normal" circumstances Mukunda Deva's involvement in the *pāika* uprising might have resulted in a considerable weakening of the position of the Rājās of Khurda if not even in their dismissal from the post of the superintendence of the Jagannātha temple. But the contradiction between the commitments of the Government

[40] Ewer, op. cit., III.

[41] Impey to Govt. quoted by Toynbee, op. cit., p. 17.

[42] Toynbee, op. cit., p. 18.

[43] MP, p. 82.

[44] The *pāika* rebellion in 1817 is celebrated in Orissa as "India's first popular rising"; see *Bharatara prathama gaṇa biplaba* by L.N. Raysingh, Cuttack 1965. See also S. De, Guide to Orissa Records, Vol. III (about the *pāika* rebellion), Bhubaneswar 1962.

[45] Ramacandra was allowed to return to Puri after the death of his father Mukunda Deva on 16.10.1817.

to protect religious institutions in India and the increasing propaganda of missionary circles in London against "British connections with idolatry in India" forced the British Government to sever its own connections with the Jagannātha temple and to hand over its administration completely to the Rājās of Khurda. Generally speaking, the problem of the connections of the Company with religious institutions in India became mainly a matter of dispute between home politicians and high officials of the Company in India on the one side, and administrators of the East India Company in India on the other side. Whereas the later justified the support of the religious institutions like the Jagannātha temple with pragmatic political arguments ("because in a political light its value is incalculable")[16] the former strongly opposed these links with moral and Christian missionary arguments[17] and condemned it as state sanction of idolatry. "At the heart of this reforming enthusiasm lay the doctrines of liberalism and evangelicalism. Though radically different in origin—the one a movement of religious revival, the other a doctrine of defiant secularism—evangelicalism and liberalism had much in common."[18]

Evangelistic influence was already felt during the preparations of the Regulation IV of 1806 and Regulation IV of 1809 through which the administration of the temple was vested in the hands of Mukunda Deva. The first missionary to visit Puri was Claudius Buchanan in 1805. His dreadful accounts[19] of the "Moloch of the heathen world" were a shock for the European mind and influenced the whole succeeding generation. In a famous speech before the University of Cambridge on July 1st, 1810 he observed: "I resolved to visit the chief seat of Hindoo religion, for which purpose I made a journey to the great Temple of Juggernaut which is to the Hindoos what Mecca is to the Mohammedans, the stronghold fountain-head of their idolatry. . Many of the pilgrims die by the way, and their bodies remain unburried, so that the road to Juggernaut may be known, at least for fifty miles, by

[16] In a letter to G. Oswald, the first Supt. of Tributary Mahals, Dowdeswell (Chief Secr. to Govt.) mentions on 10.2.1814 as one of three "circumstances which distinguish the district of Cuttack from other districts in the lower provinces: 3. The celebrated temple of Juggunnauth an institution affecting strongly the passions and feelings, of the great Body of the Hindoos on the one side and the character of the British Government on the other side." (Board of Revenue, Cuttack, Jud. Dept., Febr. 1814-March 1815).

[17] In 1857 after the outbreak of the Great Mutiny G. Poynder wrote: "That unhallowed short-sighted policy is the real cause of England's disaster National sins call down national judgements, and . . if there be one sin which does this more than another, it is idolatry." (G Poynder, *Extracts from three Speeches Delivered by the Late J. Poynder* . . London 1857, p. 1f). It is interesting to note that the Editor of J. Poynder's speeches connects directly the fight against idolatry in India with the Protestant struggle against Katholizism.

[18] T.R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt—India 1857-1870*, Princeton 1964, p. 8.

[19] It is difficult to imagine a greater and more fundamental difference than it exists between the two reports of the car festivals of the year 1804 and 1806, given by the officer Harcourt and the missionary Buchanan respectively. In 1804 Harcourt mentioned nothing at all of those observations which Buchanan described in 1806, on the contrary, Harcourt explicitly praised the 'order and regularity" of the at least 500,000 pilgrims whose attitude was "highly favourable to the British Government",

human bones which are strewed in the way. On the great day the idol was brought out. It had the character of crudelity and impurity. Men and women devoted themselves before the Moloch. I myself beheld the libations of human blood; I give you this record because I witnessed the fact."[50] In a letter to the Court of Directors of the East India Company he asked whether they are afraid that "the wretches, who come to lay their bones within the precincts of Juggernaut would mutiny and take away our dominions?" and he concludes that "it will be a most happy event when our Christian nation shall dissolve its connexion."[51]

In 1814 this influence of the missionary propaganda seems to have reached politics in Orissa. In this year Richardson proposed in a letter to the Government the abolishment of the pilgrim tax which he called "a state sanction to idolatry" and the removal of the Rājā of Khurda from the superintendence of the temple due to the above-mentioned allegations. The Government, however, flatly rejected Richardson's proposal because of its "settled and still undisputed policy" to support the natives in "the undisturbed exercise of their religious rites and ceremonies and to preserve their places of worship inviolate." Furthermore it was clearly stated that "the active interference of an European officer in affairs of this nature, was by all means to be avoided".[52] It was this pragmatic policy on the one side and the rising influence of the missionary propaganda against any further British connection with the Jagannātha temple on the other side which saved the Rājā of Khurda from being removed from the temple superintendence both in 1814 (after Richardson's complaint) and after the *pāika* rising in 1817.

Meanwhile an important change in the religious policy of the Company had taken place, which, during the following decades, was to influence deeply their relation with Hindu institutions like the Jagannātha temple. Through the renewed Charter Act of 1813 the East India Company was forced to admit for the first time missionaries to its territories in India.[53] But astonishing enough, it took one full decade till active missionary work commenced in Orissa by the Baptist Missionary Society. These missionaries, especially the militant James Peggs, came to Orissa under the influence of Buchanan's impression that Puri was the chief seat of the Hindus and Jagannātha "the stronghold and fountain-head of their idolatry". They, therefore, assumed that "a blow at Idolatry here, will prove a blow at the root".[54]

50 Quoted by J. Poynder, op. cit., p. 9 Buchanan gave a similar speech on 12.6.1810 before the Church Missionary Society, see J. Poynder, p. 10.—The question of self immolation under the wheels of Jagannātha's car was a permanent source of the agitation against the Jagannātha cult. A. Stirling, however, who had witnessed four car festivals, observed only three cases "one of which I may observe is doubtful and should probably be ascribed to accident; in the other two instances the victims had long been suffering from some excruciating complaints, and chose this method of ridding themselves of the burden of life" (1846, p. 127).

51 Quoted by K.M. Patra, 1971, p. 240 and J. Peggs, 1830, p. 279.

52 Secr. to Govt. to Richardson, 1.7.1814 (quoted by K.M. Patra. 1971, p. 243).

53 Buchanan had visited Puri in 1806 as Vice-Provost of the College of Fort William (Calcutta).

54 J. Peggs, A History of the General Baptist Mission, London 1846, p. 371.

Their blow, however, never reached the root. Contrary to their expectations it took several years till they were able to convert the first Hindu in Orissa—a Brahmin who was assisting a missionary. In 1832 the missionaries left Puri with empty hands. But they carried their struggle into Great Britain where they started an unprecedented and ultimately successful fight against British support of religious institutions in India, which Peggs once called "a perversion of British humanity, regularity and good faith".[55] It was their conviction that "the advantages of the repeal of Pilgrim Tax (implying that the British entirely withdraw their connexion from Hindu temples) are evident. The most prominent is the reduction of idolatrous establisnments".[56]

Although Lord Bentinck's Governorship in 1828 had opened the new era of a hitherto unknown zeal for reforms in India it took a considerable time till a decisive alteration in the administrative system of the Jagannātha temple took place. Act X of 1840 abolished the pilgrim tax but it enacted again that "the superintendence of the Temple of Juggernaut and its interior economy, the conduct and management of its affairs, and the control over the Priests, officers, and servants attached to the Temple, shall continue to be vested in the Rajah of Khoordah for the time being."[57]

The abolishment of the pilgrim tax, through Act X of 1840, however, was only a compromise, because the Government continued to pay the subsidy of the fixed amount of 56,342 rupees to the temple. This fact caused again a tremendous activity of the missionaries and their evangelical supporters both in Britain and India. Under the continuous pressure from these groups, the Government was forced to hand over to the Rājā of Puri various estates in lieu of the annual payments. Through these transactions the Jagannātha temple, and hence the Rājās of Puri, became economically more and more independent. The last financial links between the British Government and the Jagannātha temple were finally cut in 1863. During this period the Rājās of Puri had still not given up the hope of regaining their ancestral estate of Khurda. Rājā Vīrakeśarī Deva (1856-1862) for instance, hesitated to accept for the maintenance of the Puri temple portions of the previous Khurda State as "being his own hereditary zamindari" an idea which a British officer in his imperial ideology did not hesitate to call "an assertion which appears to be an exceedingly impertinent one".[58]

The strife of the missionaries against the "British connections with idolatry" and against the pilgrim tax was thus finally successful. But they did not reach the ultimate goal of their struggle, "the reduction of idolatrous establishment"—on the contrary, it was farer away than ever before. Paradoxically, the struggle of the missionaries had caused a considerable strengthening of the Jagannātha cult and the position of Rājā of Puri. The theological misunderstanding of the missionaries and their followers, who had concentrated their struggle against "idolatry" in India on

55 J. Peggs, 1830, p. 259.

56 J. Peggs, 1830, p. 266.

57 For the history of the preceding decade see P. Mukherjee, 1977 and K.M. Patra 1971, pp. 254-267

58 Cockburn to Board of Revenue, 12.1.1858, see also Kulke, 1974, p. 74.

Puri which they supposed to be the Mekka or the Jerusalem[59] of the Hindus, had considerably increased the fame of Jagannātha and its First Servitor" (ādya sevaka), Rājā of Puri.

The famous "Jagannath Temple Case" of the eighteens of the 19th century revealed that the Rājā of Puri as the *calanti Viṣṇu* (the "Moving Viṣṇu") and the *ādya sevaka* of Lord Jagannātha had again reached the top-most position of the traditional hierarchy of Orissa.[60] By the same time Jagannātha became a "symbol of Orissa nationalism", as shown by G.N. Dash in the following chapter.

[59] *Brief sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Orissa Mission*, Cuttack 1858, p. 1. As missionaries of a monotheistic religion they—wrongly—searched for the "chief seat of the Hindoos" (like "Mecca of the Mohammedans" or "Jerusalem of the ancient Israelits" etc.), which they thought to have found in Puri.

[60] Against a new proposal to take over the administration of the Jagannātha temple in 1882 various groups of Puri priests and Oriya Brahmins petitioned the British Government: "The Maharajah of Pooree is the most respectable person among the Hindoos of India. Though there are many wealthier Rajas in Hindoostan none of them is held by the Hindoos with equal veneration". (JTC, VI, p. 1394, No. 3 of 8.7.1882). During the Jagannātha Temple Case the "*Statesman*" celebrated the victory of the Rājā of Puri, who "is supposed... to be the incarnation of the great Mahadeo Juggernath himself" (2.4.1887).



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